THE Child-birth or Womans Lecture.

That is:

A Lecture vpon Chap. 1. ver. 57, 58. of the holie Gospell according to Luke; very necessarie to bee read and knowne of all young married and teeming Women, and not vnprofitable for men of all sortes.

By Chr. H.

Esay. 66. 7.

Before shee trauailed, shee brought foorth: and before her paine came, shee was deliuered of a man Childe.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the right Worſhipfull, and vertuous Gentlewoman, Miſtres Elizabeth Sauel, grace, mercie, and peace, (from Ieſus Chriſt, the fountaine of all heauenlie graces) be multiplied.

THis Lecture right (Worſhipfull) whereof I preſume to make you the Patroneſſe, is compact of the notes obſerued in my reading, at the birthes of your two moſt ſweet iewels, Maſter Henry, and Maſter Edward Sauels, and now publiſhed, as for the common good of all that pleaſe to reade it; ſo to performe my promiſe made long ſince vnto you, and to bee a teſtimonie of the godlie care, which your Honorable Lady-mother, the Lady Paget & your ſelfe had to ſhew all thankfulnes vnto the Lord for his great mercie towards you. For no ſooner were you thorough the goodnes of God deliuered, but that both the one time and the other, I was ſent vnto from her Ladyſhip and your ſelfe, to giue thankes vnto the Lord on your behalfe: ſo that the ſunne had not ſhewed his beames before ſuch time as the ſame mornings, wherein you receaued thoſe bleſſings. We had the whole familie together, the right Worſhipfull your Father, and your Huſband, being alſo preſent; like as was her Ladiſhip her ſelfe, with your Worſhipfull ſiſter Miſtres Baeſhe, performed this exerciſe, and ſang Pſalmes of thankeſgiuing. I wiſh as I nothing doubt, of your good continuance in this ſo holy a courſe, that all others, who are partakers of the ſame mercies, would alſo imitate & follow your godly example and preſident herein: which they ſhould the rather do, if they could or would conſider aright, how many ſingular bleſſings in this one thing doo concurre, for nothing hindreth ſo much our thankefulnes

vnto the Lod as the want of a right consideratiõ of his great benefits, wherewith he ladeth vs, which either for lack of insight into them; or for that they seeme ordinarie, and befall vs euerie daie, and others aswell as vs are therefore the lesse of the greater sorte regarded: but were we affected as wee should, the more ordinarie that they are, the more thankefull we should be, since our sinnes euerie day deserue to break the ordinarie course of them; for that we breake not off our sinnes by righteousnes, nor our iniquities by mercie toward the poore. And since we see dailie, many to faile of thẽ whom we may iustifie in respect of our selues, for not to speak of holy Rahel and Ely his daughter in lawe; how many right godly and vertuous women, do daily in Childe-bed miscarrie? They therefore who haue the good successe which you now thrise (the Lord be blessed for it) haue had, & alwaies may haue; ought (with Elizabeth and you) acknowledge his great mercies to them. For though it were ordinarie to all in safetie to bee deliuered, which wee see is not: yet therein they shall finde many extraordinarie blessings, as by this lecture they may partlie conceaue, but most plainelie may vnderstand of themselues, and by themselues, if themselues they will call to remembrance of their owne deliuerances, and not forget al their former distres (whereout, without the Lords hand, it had been impossible for them to haue been deliuered) through ioy of a mã child, whom they haue brought into the world. Leauing therefore the further consideration hereof vnto your Worship, and to all other godly and vertuous Matrons, that haue tasted herein, how sweet and bountifull the Lord is. I end, beseeching you to accept of this my poore labour: and praying the Lord that it may be profitable vnto al, in stirring them vp to a greater thankefulnes vnto the Lord for his so great mercies bestowed vpon them.

Dani 4.24.

Your Worships to God, for you and yours in his praiers.

Chr. H.

Luke: 1. 57, 58.

¶ Now Elizabeths time was fulfilled that she should be deliuered, and she brought foorth a sonne.
And her neighbours and Cosins heard tell: howe the Lord had shewed his great mercy vpon her, and they reioyced with her.

Who this Elizabeth was, whom here we haue mentioned, none I suppose to be so ignorant, but that he knoweth. She was (saith this Euangelist) of the daughters of Aaron: her husbād was Zacharias a Priest, and both he and she, iust before GOD, walking in all his comaundements and ordinances without reproofe. A notable patterne and example, not onely for ministers, and their wiues, whose blameles conuersation in all things, and at all times, ought to be a second instruction vnto the people: but for all couples (as we tearme them) of what degree, or calling soeuer they bee, that they themselues fearing the Lord, and walking in his wayes: they may not onely teach as did Iob, but commaund also as did Abraham, their sonnes, and their household, to knowe the way of the Lord, to doe righteousnes and iudgement. For this the godly whome any care of religion hath touched, haue alwayes according to his commaundement done, and this of his mercie towards them he hath not left vnrewarded. Abraham his reward with God was exceeding

Luk. 1. 6.

Iob. 1. 5.
Gen. 18. 19.

ding great, being made for this, as it were, one of his priuie councell. For shall I conceale or keepe any thing from Abraham (saith God) since he wil teach his sonnes and his housholde. Iob who vsed euery day to sanctifie his sonnes, that is to prepare them vnto sanctification, by teaching them how; though for his triall & our example, in the chiefest of his prosperous felicitie he was humbled & cast down; yet the Lord restored him againe and blessed his latter dayes, more than his former. The like may be said of Dauid, of Iosua, of Iaacob, of Cornelius the Italian Captaine, and such like; whose carefull obedience to the commaundements of the Lorde, with the no lesse diligēt information of their housholds therin, is set downe; & their reward from the Lord by his singular blessings in great aboundance bestowed vpon them, is as it were particularly noted. Zacharias therefore and Elizabeth as no doubt they performed this duetie, so they are not alone, neither is the rewarde of their holy conuersation the least: for whereas Elizabeth was barren and long without a childe, wherby she was a reproach among women, the Lord for a reward maketh her fruitfull, and the mother, not of a meane babe, but of such a one as a greater before him of a woman was neuer borne. This blessing that the Lord bestowed vpon Zacharias and Elizabeth his wife: the Euangelist S. Luke here sheweth in these two verses, and withall declareth how her neighbours and Cosins with her reioyced thereat. The blessing is heere amplified by three circumstances: First of the time, It was fulfilled: Secondly of the deliuerance, for at her full time shee was deliuered: Thirdly of the fruite it selfe: which was a sonne.

Gen. 18. 17.

Iob. 42. 12.

Psal. 101.

Iosu. 24. 15.

Gen. 35. 2.

Act. 10. 2.

Matt. 12. 11

To accomplish, and fulfill the full, and the iust time, before the deliuerance, how exceeding great a blessing it is, may best be considered by the contrarie, which is when women bring forth vntimely fruite, such which as

the

the Prophet saith neuer seeth the sunne. For this (besides Psal. 58.8.
that it is a great griefe, to the mother, to haue her wombe to be her childes Graue, and withall bringeth her to extreame danger of her owne life, if not to death it selfe) is a curse which the Lord threatneth to punish them with who doe rebelliously transgresse against him. Their glorie (saith the Prophet Hoseah) that is their Children, Hose. 9.11.
which mē accoūt their glory shal flie away frō the birth, from the wombe, and from the concedtion: that is either being conceiued, they shall not be quickned: or being quickned, they shall not in the wombe accomplish the iust time the birth, whereby for glorie they receiue a kinde of dishonour, and for comfort and ioy, sorrow and griefe. Examples of this iudgement among the Iewes, no doubt but there were many though they are not recorded: for that as now, so then children in such sorte borne, were hid and not spoken of as appeareth by this, that Iob wished vnto himselfe. Why was I not hid as an vntimely fruite Iob. 3.16.
either as infants which haue not seene the light: which manner of secret, and close hiding of them, sheweth also how fearefull a curse it is, when as thereby it is signified that both the mother is ashamed of, and loatheth the fruit of her own bodie, & that the eies of others are not able to endure the sight thereof. Now though the wicked are not alwayes ouertaken with this curse, but are made partakers of the contrarie blessing in such great measure that not onely themselues doe accomplish the dayes of their deliuerance, but their beasts also: according to that Iob. 21.10.
which Iob saith: Their bullock gendreth and faileth not; 11, &c.
their Cow calueth and casteth not her calfe: they send foorth their children like sheepe, signifying thereby the great number of their Children: Yet is this the special blessing, promised vnto the children of God, to them that serue him and hearken to his lawes, to heare and doe them, according as we read: Exod. 23. If thou hearken

Exo.23,26. to his voice and doe all that I speake, there shall none cast their fruit or be barren in the land, the number of thy dayes will I fulfill. This promise then we see the Lord maketh vnto his children, which he also performeth vnto them; as here vnto Elizabeth: vnles their sinnes, as Ier.5.25. they hinder many other good things doe also hinder it. And when he performeth it to them, it is a blessing from him, and a most sure token of his fauour and louing kindnes towards them: wheras to the wicked, though they commonly enioy the commoditie thereof, as they doe of Mat.5.45. the sunne and the raine which shineth and falleth vpon the good and the bad, the iust and vniust: Yet it is to them as are all other things of this life which they vsurp, but as a curse heaping coales vpon their heads, and making their condemnation more grieuous.

The next circumstance whereby this blessing is amplified, is, that she was deliuered: which of it selfe howe great a mercy it is, may be considered also by the contrarie, which is, when either a woman who hath fulfilled her time, cannot be deliuered, or in such sorte after long and grieuous trauaile is deliuered, as therewith in the anguish, and panges thereof she endeth her life: This is (saith Hezechias) a day of tribulation: the Children are 2.Kin.19.3 come to the birth, & there is no strength to bring forth: comparing the estate of Ierusalem besieged by Zenacherib, and not able of it selfe to defend it selfe, to a woman trauailing of Childe at the full ende of her tearme, and yet wanting strength to bring it forth as though hee should say, if a woman in such a case is most miserable, then most miserable is our estate. This then sufficiently declareth the lamentable condition of a woman in such distresse. But consider we it further by examples: what a day of tribulation was it to Rachel, when after many grieuous pangs and great difficultie, being deliuered, her sorrowes decreased neither in hearing nor seeing that

she had brought forth a man childe into the worlde: but encreased, to the taking away of her life, in so much that yeelding vp the ghost; shee called her Child Ben-noni, the sonne of my sorrow. In like manner what a day of tribulation was it to Phinehas wife, mentioned 1. Sam. 4. 19. when not answering the women that stoode about her, who bad her not feare, for that she had borne a sonne: nor regarding at all the fruite of her wombe, she named him Ica-bod, saying, The glorie of GOD is departed from Israel: and so with griefe of heart, repeating the words againe: The glorie is departed from Israel, shee departed also & left her life; giuing the women standing by to vnderstand, that the glory of God being gone out of the land, which is, when his true religion and seruice is taken away, as it was then from them, the Arke being taken by the Philistines: that there can no comfort be receiued, by Children, nor by life it selfe. A notable example for the women to make them carefull of the true religion of God, who now together with their husbands are so carelesse thereof, that whether it depart from them or tarrie with them, they make no reckoning, for they account not the gospell the glorie of England, as Phinehas wife accounted the Arke the glorie of Israel: to the therefore we must preach, as Esay preached to the women of his time: Rise vp ye women that are at ease, heare my voice ye careles daughters, hearken vnto my words: For assure your selues that what day the gospell (which now ye neglect, and doe not regarde; respecting onely your pride, pleasure, and profite) be taken from you, the same day shall be taken from you the ornaments of your pride: as your high corked slippers, your golden Talls, &c. yea your husbands, who haue cherished you, and your Children, whome in great sorrow ye haue brought forth, and the Lord shall giue you for husbands widowhead, for children barrennes, for sweete sauour stinck, for a girdle

Gen. 35. 18

1. Sa. 4. 19.

Esay. 32. 9.

Esay. 3. 24.

a rent, for dressing of the haire baldnes, for a fine stomacher sack-cloth, and for beautie burning.

Thus it befell to the women of Siloh: and thus the Lord threatneth to doe, as he did vnto them, and to all other that are careles of his seruice, and rebellious against him. And therefore he sendeth vs to Siloh, saying: Goe ye now to my place which was in Siloh, where I set my name at the beginning: and beholde what I did to it for the wickednes of my people Israel. But to returne from this digression vnto Phinehas wife, she is a patterne as I said, in whome we may see the great distresse and miserie of a woman lying in such plight, that though at length she be deliuered of her childe, yet she is not deliuered from her paines, vntill she be deliuered of her life: Yet this case in comparison of theirs, who hauing accomplished their full time and cannot be deliuered at all, seemeth somewhat tollerable. And of such, histories record some, and women no doubt, are priuie to many mo: from these perils and daungers, when the Lord deliuereth a woman, that not onely she bringeth forth with the safegard of her life, but that before the trauaile shee bringeth forth, and before her paine come shee be deliuered of her Child: howe great mercie doth the Lord shew vnto that woman? This the Lord speaketh of the soudain restauration of the Church: Before shee trauailed shee brought foorth, and before her paines came she was deliuered of a man Childe: declaring thereby that as he pleaseth to giue such a speedy and easie deliuerance to some, whome it pleaseth him, that as it were before their paines come they are deliuered; so he can and will when his Church is by all likelyhood in greatest danger, euen as a woman is when shee boweth her selfe to trauaile of Child, vpon the soudaine, deliuer it without paine and trouble, in the turning of an hand. This is more manifestly shewed in the Reuela, 12. where the great danger of the Church

Ierem. 7.12

Isay. 66.7.

Apoc. 12.2.

of

of God, and the miraculous deliuerance thereof, is set
foorth vnder the similitude of a womã trauailing in birth
readie to be deliuered. Let women therefore, who are
partakers of this mercy, as was Elizabeth: namely, to
be both deliuered, and that without the dolefull continu-
ing in labour and trauaile many dayes, as many doe ac-
knowledge that the Lord bestoweth vpon them an extra-
ordinarie blessing to be wondred at; as it is in the former
place of Esay: Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath Esay.66.8.
seen such things? assoone as Sion trauailed she brought
forth her children. For what is one woman in compa-
rison of the whole Church of God, men and women; and
what greater mercie doth or can the Lord in this life be-
stow vpon them, than spædelie (in such distresse) when
they call to heare and deliuer to them:

The last circumstance in this first verse obserued is,
that she brought forth a Sõne: diuers we know bring forth
monsters, which can haue the name either of sonnes nor Luk.
of daughters. In that therefore the Lord freeth Eliza- 16,
beth from this curse, and graunteth her to bring foorth
a childe, and he a man child, and such a childe who should
be filled with the holy ghost, euẽ frõ his mothers womb,
to be the Prophet of the most high, and to goe before him
in the spirit and power of Elias; it is the summe and the
perfection of the former benefites: and that which ma-
keth ordinarily, euen in ordinarie births, the sorrowes in
trauaile to be forgotten. This women know to be true
by their own experience: And our Sauiour Christ (from Ioh. 16.21.
whom nothing is hid) teacheth vs also the same, saying;
A woman when shee trauaileth hath sorrow because
her howre is come: but so soone as she is deliuered of
her Childe, she remembreth no more the anguish: for
ioy that a man is borne into the worlde. Where by
Man hee meaneth as well the woman Childe as the
man Childe, both being the great blessings of the Lord,

though in some respects: the man childe is preferred to the woman, as by whom the name, which men and godly men most of all earthly blessings do desire, is the longest in remembrance continued. And therfore the Godly men and women in the Scripture who haue been barren haue especially asked of the Lord a sonne: so Abraham desired a sonne, that Eliezer the steward of his house might not be his heire. And Anna prayed for a man child that she might dedicate him to the seruice of the Lorde in his Temple: In which respect also it appeareth that the godly then desired rather sonnes than daughters; howsoeuer to serue the Lord in that office, seemeth now a thing so cõtemptible; though the ministrie of the gospel be farre more glorious, as the Apostle notably sheweth to the Corinth. than was the ministrie of the law: That euerie man (be he neuer so meane) disdaineth; saue that necessity for want of other maintenãce constraineth him, to train vp his Sonne as Anna did her Samuel, to serue the Lord in that vocation: No maruaile therfore though the Lord disdaine to giue them sonnes, who doe disdaine to consecrate them vnto him; or if he giue such sonnes, no maruaile though as commonly we see his blessing be not vpon them, since of many they will not spare him one, but if all other meane faile they will rather bestow them vpon * Galen Iustinian † Littleton, and commit them to the windes and the Seas, to aduenture thereupon their wittes, their goods, and their liues, and to other handicraftes, than that they should serue him to his glorie in his Church: But to leaue complaining of such to whom the Lord for this cause I doubt not grieueth oftentimes barren wombes and dry breastes. The issue whether it bee of Sonnes or daughters, it is a singular blessing, and the cheefe blessing of this life: for to bee blessed in the fruite of the wombe, excelleth the blessing in the fruite of the ground; the wife to bee as the

Gen. 15.2.

Iere

1.Sa. 1.11.

2.Cor. 3.8.

at is to
* Phisiti-
ns, ciuill or
mmon
awyers
† archants,
&c.

Hose. 9.14.

al. 128.3.

fruitfull

fruitefull Vine, and the Children to bee as the Olive branches round about the table, surmounteth the fatnes of the olive, wherewith are honored, and the red bloud of the Grape, whereby are cheered both God and men; for sonnes are more pleasing than pleasant plants, & daughters are more louely and glorious in parents eyes, than are the polished corners of a temple. The Prophet Dauid in the 127. Psalme, compareth Children to arrowes in the hand of a strong man, and pronounceth him blessed, that hath his quiuer full of them: shewing also, wherein that blessednes doth consist, namelie in this, that they whome the Lord hath thus blessed shall not bee ashamed when they speake with their enemies in the gate: for whereas their enemies would haue vpbraided them as accursed, by reason of their barrennes, like as Peninnah did Anna, this their opprobrie by their hauing of Children, is taken away according to that with Elizabeth here saieth of her selfe: and their mouthes as Anna saith, enlarged ouer their enemies. Thus then wee see what a blessing this was to Elizabeth, that shee was made fruitefull, and brought forth a sonne, and how generallie the fruite of the wombe, is an inheritance and blessing that commeth of the Lord. And this that it is so, is a most necessarie doctrine in these daies to be taught, in respect of two sortes of people; the one who thinketh Children to be a charge: and therefore if they might haue their choise, had rather to bee without them than haue them. How farre are such from the knowledge of Gods trueth in this behalfe, which teacheth vs, that Children are a blessing, an inheritance, a reward, and a crowne vnto vs from the Lord: this if such would duely consider, it would both reforme their corrupt, and wicked iudgement in this behalfe, and it would also comfort them in their distresse, being ouercharged in their owne eyes, with a charge of Children: for what greater comfort can

Iudg. 9. 9. & 13.

Psal. 127. 4. 5

1. Sam. 1. 6.

1. Sam. 2. 1.

Psal. 127. 3.

Prou. 17. 6.

there

there bee, than with our eyes, sensibly to see the Lordes blessings and signes of his fauour before vs, which because many in their Children cannot see, by reason of their ignorant hearts, which neuer were instructed in Gods schoole, they take more comfort in the increase of their swine, than they do in the increase of sonnes and of daughters. The other sort, for whom the knowledge of this doctrine is necessarie, are they who taking delight, and that great as great may bee in their Children, they yet sound not to the deapth of this blessing; they perceiue it not to be a blessing from the Lord, but do take it to be a naturall and ordinarie worke of nature, whereby they both robbe the Lord of that honour, and thankes which is due vnto him, and depriue themselues also of that inward ioye: which in the consideration thereof the godlie do conceiue, who thereby perceaue the Lord, to haue a speciall regarde vnto them, according as Elizabeth did, as it is manifest by these her owne words: Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the daies that he looked vpon me. Where we see that by her sonne that she had conceaued, & afterwards brought forth: she maketh an argument vnto her selfe, that the Lord loked down vpon her; or as the Virgin Marie saith: regarded her estate: than which assuredlie to knowe, as she knew it perfectly hereby, what greater ioye could her heart conceiue? But least by this generall speach, it shoulde bee thought, that children are vnto all a token of God his fauour, and that from them they may reason as did Elizabeth: Thus hath the Lord dealt with me, in the daies that hee looked vpon me. It must bee vnderstode, as partlie in the beginning I signified, that these temporal things which the Lord bestoweth indifferentlie, both vpon the good and the bad; are then vnto vs blessings and signes, and assurances of the Lordes fauour and louing kindenes towards vs: when as wee, vppon whome they are besto-

Luke. 1.25.

Luke. 1.48.

wed

wed are such, who doo from our hearts, loue, serue, and feare him? For otherwise, if he who receiueth them from the Lord is wicked and vngodlie, and so continue therein without repentance, they are not vnto him blessings, but cursings, not pledges of his saluation thorough the grace and fauour of God in Christ: but heauie tokens, and certaine of his more grieuous condemnation. The Scripture therefore to put a difference, it thus speaketh: Blessed is euerie one, that serueth the Lord, and walketh in his waies. Psal. 128. 1. And thereupon reckoning God his blessings vpon such, in respect of the labors of their hands, in respect of the fruitefulnes of their Wiues, in respect of the towardlines of their Children: it thus concludeth: Loe thus shall the man bee blessed, that feareth the Lord. The feare therefore of the Lord, which is manifested, by a carefull watching in his waies: is it that sanctifieth to vs the fruite of the wombe, & the fruite of the ground, which hallowеth our basket and our store; and which blesseth our goings out, and our commings in: and maketh what euer we haue, be it smal or great, to be an exceeding blessing vnto vs. But with the wicked it is nothing so, for though to vse againe the words of holy Iob; They liue, waxe olde, and growe in wealth, though their seede be established in their sight with them, and their generation before their eyes: though their houses be peaceable and without feare, and the rod of God be not vpon them: though their Bullock gendereth and falleth not, their cow calueth and casteth not her calfe: though they send foorth their Children like sheepe, and their sonnes daunce: though they take the Tabret and Harpe, and reioyce in the sounde of the Organes: though they want nothing that their heart wisheth, or their eye lusteth after. In which case, thus laded with the things of this life, we (like as did Iob) doo often see the most vngodlie men, according to that the Psalmist Iob. 21. 7. &c.

saith: Loe these are the wicked, they prosper & increase in riches, their eyes stand out for fatnes. Though I say all these things, and al other good things of this life befall them, according to their owne hearts desire: yet neither Children nor any other thing else, though they haue gathered golde as dust, and siluer as the stones of the streat, is, or can be a crowne, or a blessing vnto them. For notwithstanding all those things, the increase of their house saith Iob, shall goe away, it shall flowe away, in the day of the Lords wrath, they shall perish for euer, like their dung, and they that haue seene them, shall see them no more. Thus it is apparant, how that to the godlie onelie, Children and all things are a blessing: as was this Sonne to Elizabeth, which shee brought forth, for that she together with her husband feared the Lord: walking in all his waies and ordinances without reproofe. So that to conclude this first part, we see, how in euerie circumstance, which the Euangelist here noteth, the Lorde his mercie towardes her appeareth: as it dooth also to all them, to whome hee sheweth the like fauour to conceaue, to fulfill their time, to bee deliuered, and to bring forth their issue, whether it bee Sonne or Daughter.

Iob. 20. 7.

Luke. 1

Now followeth the second part, which sheweth how her Neighbours, and Cousins reioyced thereat. And herein these circumstances are to bee obserued, first, who they were that reioyced, secondlie how, and thirdly for what.

Luke. 1

They that reioyced were her Neighbours, and Cousins that is kinsfolke in generall. And here in parte began to bee fulfilled, that which the Angell foreshewed to Zacharias himselfe, to wit, that manie shoulde reioyce at his birth. Which they did as in respect of Elizabeth, whose reproache hereby they sawe to bee done away, whereof they could not, but bee right glad: so especiallie in regarde of that hope, which they had conceiued

Luke. 1. 14

ued of the Childe, by the relation of the Angell vnto Zacharias: both therefore for the benefit, as is respected Elizabeth and her Husband particularlie, and for the blessing: which hereby the Church of GOD should receiue generallie, did they thus at this birth reioyce. In the former they performed the duetie of kinde Neighbours and kindred; and in the latter the part of good and godlie Christians. For to speake of the former, it is the duetie of good Neighbours and kinsfolke to be glad, and to reioyce at the good of their Kindred, and Neighbours. So did (as the last yeare vppon like occasion I shewed) the Neighbours of Naomie in the booke of Ruth: for when Ruth her Daughter in Lawe, was deliuered of a Childe by Obed, The Women her Neighbours (saieth the text) saide vnto her in reioycing manner. Blessed be God which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman: this shall bring thy life againe, and cherish thine old age, for thy daughter in law which loueth thee, hath borne vnto him, &c. Thus also did Iob his brethren, friends and acquaintance, for they after the Lorde had turned the captiuitie of Iob, came vnto him, and brought presents with them, to comfort him, and the euill that the Lord had brought vpon him, and to reioyce with him for his recouerie there from. This is to Reioyce with them that reioyce, and to weepe with them that weep: like as the Apostle commaudeth: whereby it appeareth that such good Neighbourhode was then, and that it ought to be also now: for which cause, their example, and this commaundement is left vnto vs. But good neighbourhode is now gone, the common complaint in euery place is: and Cousins kindnes is such, that euen the name it selfe through Cousins that are Cousiners, is growne to bee odious, and a name of reproach: for so farre are men in these daies from reioycing at the good of eare others, though they bee Neighbours the nerrowe

Iob.1.4.

Tob.12.7.

Ruth.4.14.

Iob.42.11.

Rom.12. 15.

together, or kinsemen of the neereſt bloud, that they rather repine and grudge, that any fat ſhould fall beſides their owne beards: and as for the weeping with them that are in affliction, thereby to comfort them, it may bee ſaide, as Iob ſaide of his friends in the ſame reſpect: that in his behalfe men haue forſaken the feare of the Almightie; for whereas, Hee that is in miſerie ſhould bee comforted of his Neighbour, all his friends and neighbours (as Salomon ſaith of the brethren of the poore) do hate him, if not reuile him, as Iobs friends did him. This is a complainte more fitte for another place, yet not amiſſe here, for that by the churliſhnes, and vnnaturalnes of men in theſe daies, the loue of theſe Neighbours & Kinſfolkes may the better appeare. For howeuer men in theſe daies, malice and grudge, they reioyced and were glad at the great bleſſing of the Lord beſtowed vpon Zacharias and Elizabeth, and would no doubt, if occaſion had been, haue alſo comforted them, as many of the Iewes did comfort Marie & Martha for the death of their brother Lazarus.

Iob.6.14.

Prou.19.7.

Ioh.11.19.

But as men faile in this dutie, ſo doe they no leſſe in that other, which is, to reioyce for the good which generallie befalleth the Church of God, for ſo careleſs are they of ſuch ſpirituall things, that for the moſt part, they ſee them not, or ſeeing them, they regard them not, for though an hundreth Ihon Baptiſts were borne, that is, though an hundreth, or a thouſand ſuch, who were able to preach vnto vs the Goſpell of Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſinnes, were ſent forth by the Lord of the harueſt to furniſh our own Churches, & ſuch other as want their miniſterie: yet farre would many bee from reioycing thereat, and from praying and bleſſing the Lord for ſo viſiting of his people, which alſo they would be, as they are in reſpect of ſundrie other good bleſſings, as for the bleſſing of good Magiſtrats, of peace, of plentie,

&c.

ce. whereby the Church of God is made to flourish. For though these things be done, they doe well like, and chiefelie desire: yet it is onelie in respect of their owne priuate commoditie, and for the bodie sake, for that they thereby also receaue benefite and pleasure: for otherwise, they would not respect them, in regard of the good that commeth thereby, eyther to their owne soules, or to the Church of GOD, for whose cause yet, and not for their owne, they doe inioye them.

This their corruption appeareth manifestly hereby, for that though they heare of neuer so great distresse of the Church of God beyonde the Seas, they are thereby no more affected to weepe quam si dura silex, aut stet marpesia mutis: than is the hardest flint, nor though they heare of neuer so good the successe thereof, are they at all more affected to reioyce, than was Timon of Athens: whereby they shew themselues not to be of the communion of Saints, nor members of the mystical bodie of Christ: betwixt whom is the like or greater Sympathie, than is betwixt the members of this our naturall bodie, wherein if one member suffer, all suffer with it, and if one member be had in honor, all the other members reioyce with it. This fellow feeling of the good of the church of God in general, by the birth of Iohn Baptist, had these neighbours and Cousins of Elizabeth, for which cause at her deliuerance of him, they reioyced. And the like haue all they that are in deede of the communion of Saints, neyther can any truely say, that hee is a member of the bodie of Christ, but till in some measure, he be partaker of the same: And this may suffice for the parties that reioyced. 1. Cor. 1 26.

The manner of their reioycing followeth to be considered, which though heere it be not expressed: yet in what sorte the Godlie haue vsed to reioyce, we cannot be ignorant, since else-where it is often and at large de-

Luke. 2. 29 chaeu. Simeon reioyced in singing, Lord now lettest
Luk. 1. 46 thou thy seruant depart in peace. Marie in singing, My
soule doth magnifie the Lord. This Zacharias in sing-
ing, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that hath visi-
Luk. 1. 64 ted and redeemed his people. And the women that
Ruth. 4. 14. were at Ruths labour in saying, Blessed bee God,
which hath not left thee this day without a kinseman,
Iob. By these and sundrie others, as by that song of Anna,
1. Sa. 2. 1. 2 1. Sam. 2, 1, 2. &c. we may gather, that the spirituall
&c. manner of reioycing either for this, or any other benefit,
Prou is, in yeelding thankes vnto the Lord, and praise vnto
his name. For this the Lord requireth of vs, and this the
Godlie hath bound themselues, (as it were by solemne
promise) to performe vnto him. What shal I render vnto
Psa. 116. 12 the Lord (saith the Prophet Dauid,) for all his benefites
13 towards me? I will take the Cup of saluation and call
Psal. 118. vpon or praise the name of the Lord. And againe, Open
ye vnto me the gates of righteousnesse, that I may en-
ter in and prayse the Lord. And why? because though he
Ioh. hath chastened me sore, (as iustlie I haue deserued) yet
hath he not deliuered me to death (as in iustice hee
might.) Lea, when she had conceaued, & borne her fourth
sonne, she saide, Now will I praise the Lord: And that
she might the better bee put in minde of her promise in
this behalfe, she called his name Iudah, that is in Eng-
Gen. 29. 35. lish, praise. Thus to alleadge no more examples, wee see
how our manner of reioycing, as for other benefites, so
namely for this great blessing of God, in giuing vnto
vs an happie increase of Children, consisteth in rendring
praise and thankes vnto him. This if it goeth before, not
in hipocrisie for a fashion and shew, but in the sinceritie
of heart, and simplicitie of minde, then may other reioy-
Gen. 21. 8 cinges follow after, then may we with Abraham make
a feast, and vse such other semblances of ioye which the
Godlie in the feare of God haue vsed, for by that, these

are

are sanctified and made volte vnto vs, and without that these are very prophane and heathenish, howe glittering a shewe soeuer they make in the eyes of the worlde. Our first care therefore must be, if wee be true neighbours and kindred, to giue thankes vnto the Lord, to blesse his name, to yeelde praises vnto him for his benefites and blessings bestowed vpō him, or them, by whom we dwell, and with whom we are alied, for in such sorte no doubt, as all the Godlie haue vsed to doe, so the Godlie neighbours, & Cousins of Elizabeth reioyced, and were glad; wherein they shewed themselues rightly religious towards God; and hartie (not fained neighbours and friends) to their good neighbour and Cousin Elizabeth. But not onely they, as I should haue noted in the former part, reioyced, but she also: for it is heere saide, that they reioyced with her, Elizabeth her selfe, as shee was the thiefe vpon whom this mercie was bestowed, so was she the chiefe, and as it were the ring leader, in giuing of thankes; for she both stirred vp her selfe in thankefulnesse to reioyce, and also vsed meanes to declare vnto her neighbours, & her Cousins, what the Lord had done for her, that they also for it, with her might reioyce. For thus much doe these words declare, wherein it is saide, that her neighbours and Cousins heard tell, how the Lord had shewed his great mercie vpon her. For by whome should they heare it, (especially her husband being dumb) but by her, or her meanes, who had receaued it, and therefore could best tell how to expresse it? For not onelie outwardlie as others, but inwardlie also did she see, tast and feele, this great mercie of the Lord bestowed vpō her. According therefore to that which in eucrie respect, more than others she knew, could she, (as no doubt shee did) expresse each thing more fullie to the glorie of God.

And this hath been the practise of the godly, alwaies in this behalfe to be blabs as we say, to blab foorth and

declare

declare, what mercies the Lord hath powred foorth vpon them. Come vnto me, saith the Prophet: and I will tel you what the Lord hath done for my Soule. So Peter, when by the Angel of the Lord hee was deliuered out of prison: he tolde the manner therof to them that were gathered together at Maries house, and willed them to shew the same things vnto Iames, and other the brethren: The like at our Sauiour Christ his commaundement, did the man out of whome the diuel was cast: Luk. 8. 27. He went and preached (saith the Euangelist) verse, 39. throughout al the Citie what great things Iesus had done vnto him. For this, euen as by this one exãple it is manifest, the Lord requireth of vs, that wee should doe both concerning priuate and publique benefites: to rehearse and to shew thē foorth vnto others; least the remembrãce of them should die, and be forgotten: and so the Lord lose his honour due vnto him for them. This was most carefully obserued by the Israelites, so long as among them remained any, eyther care or conscience of the true seruice of God, as is manifest by the 78. Psalme: wherein is shewed both how the Lord commaunded, and they performed vnto him this duetie, by shewing foorth his prayses, his power, and wonderfull workes vnto their Children, according as he established it for a testimonie in Iacob, and ordained it for a law in Israel. But when they began to be careles of his seruice, and to wax wearie of his religion; then decayed likewise in them, this duetie of remembring each other of the benefites of God towards them: insomuch that it is said in the 2. of Iudges: that Iosuah being dead and that generation: there followed a generation, which neyther knew the Lord nor the workes which he had done for Israel: yea euen that miraculous worke of bringing them foorth of Ægipt was quite buried in oblition, as if it had neuer been. And this it is to be doubted, it will fare ere it be long with

Psal. 66. 16.

Act. 12. 17.

Luke 8. 27.

Psal. 78 2. 3. &c.

Iudg. 2. 10.

vs:

but for whereas the Lord hath bestowed vpon euerie one of vs particularly, and vpon this land generally, as great blessings, in respect both of things of this life, & of the things concerning the life to come; as euer he bestowed vpon that people of Israel: yet so careles is both preacher and people, one and other, that I feare mee shortly all will be forgotten, and not so much as that our miraculous deliuerance from the Spanish inuasion bee kept in remembrance: we can talk and prate fast enough of vanitie, and of the idle conceites of our own heart and braine: Yea we can readely blabbe, and tell foorth what may iniurie one another in his goods or good name, for to one of these endes tendeth most of our communication in these dayes, saue that much of it also is wanton and vnbeseeming Christians, such as corrupteth good manners, and grieueth the holy spirite of God by whom we are sealed vnto the day of redemption. But to tell forth what the Lord hath done for our soules, as did Dauid, what great things Iesus hath done for vs, as did the possessed; what great mercies he hath shewed vpon vs, as Elizabeth here did: or what deliuerances, benefites, and blessings he hath, and still dayly doth bestowe vpon vs, and our land, that thereby we might the rather stirre vp our selues and others to praise the Lord, to pray for the continuance of his louing kindnes towardes vs: in these cases, and such like, wee are mute as a fish, or as the dumb, that openeth not his mouth. This corruption howsoeuer it hath ouertaken vs: yet now let vs bee scholed by this vertuous woman, and learne of her for our amendment in this behalfe these two lessons: namely our selues vpon whome God hath powred forth his blessings; first to reioyce in thankfulnes and praise to his name: and then to communicate and declare it to others, that they with vs, and wee with them may doe the same. For thus wee see Elizabeth did, her selfe she reioyced,

Ephe. 4. 30.

Psal. 66. 16.

Luke. 8. 39.

and certified her neighbours and Cosins how great mercie the Lord had shewed vpon her: for which cause they also (when they heard tell thereof) reioyced with her.

What this great mercy was which the Lord had shewed vpon Elizabeth, may be vnderstood by that which hath been said: to wit, that whereas she had been a long time barren, and thereby a reproach among women; now the Lord had giuen her to conceaue, to accomplish her full time, to be deliuered, and to bring forth a Sonne. Euery one of these is a great mercie, as seuerally it hath been shewed; how much more then, when they come all together in their full perfection, as a reeke of Corne commeth in due season into the Barne. This teacheth women especially, and so al other generally, what account they haue to make of the conception and bearing of their Children, and from whence it doth proceede: namely that they haue to account of it as of a great mercy, and as proceeding from the great mercy of God. Wretched therefore are they that account it as an ordinarie thing, proceeding onely from the mutuall coniunction of man and woman: for who hath so bewitched them, that they see not many to want this blessing: to die without an heir, and to leaue their possession to strangers, if not to enemies; though a long time beginning in the flower of their age they haue liued a married life:

Gen. 30. 1. 2

This opinion it seemeth Rahel had conceiued, when she said to Iaacob, giue me Children or else I die; but Iaacob corrected her fondnes saying: am I in Gods steed that I should giue thee Children. Children therefore againe wee see come of God; without whose blessing a woman remaineth barren, not able to conceiue: or conceiuing, without strength to bring forth her fruite. Looke therefore, and account howe many Children you haue borne, and reckon that so many mercies, yea great mercies

cies, (whereof euerie one containeth a number of mercies) ye haue receaued from the Lorde.

That whereas others haue remained as dry Chippes, you haue beene as fruitfull Vines in your husbands houses. And this, as you must account a mercie, so you must acknowledge it to proceede from the free mercie of God; without any desert or merit of yours. It is from his mercie that you conceaue, that you fulfill your time, that you are deliuered of Children, not of Monsters. Were it not for his mercie, your sinnes (euen the best of the whole Sexe) deserue, that in some of these, if not in al of these you should miscarrie. The multiplying of your paines in the conception & bringing foorth, it proceeded of the curse of God, the deliuerance from those paines, that therein you perish not, it is of the great mercie of God. This Elizabeth and her Cousins here confesse, & and this no doubt, all such women as feare God, do with thankesgiuing acknowledge. Gen. 3. 16.

And this cannot be, but a great comfort vnto you, to consider when as in other thinges, so in your children especiallie, you haue such notable pledges of the Lord his mercie towards you; for thus may you say, if the Lord in this and this child, and so in all the rest had not shewed me contrarie to my deserts great mercie, the curse of sorowes (which iustlie I deserue) had ouerwhelmed me, that I should neuer haue liued to haue praised the Lord in the Land of the liuing. As therefore (to conclude) you haue the greatest tokens of God his mercie towards you, so you must labour, that in you may appeare the greatest signes of all dutifull obedience vnto the Lord: otherwise the Lord for your vnthankefulnesse will cut off his mercies from you, whereby you shall die, not onely in your sorrowes, to the losse of your liues, but in your sinnes, to the losse of your soules. But if according to the example of all holy Matrons, and especially of this our Eli-

zabeth, you render thankes vnfaynedlie, because thanks, by many to be rendred vnto the Lord for his great mercies vpon you, then be you assured, that his mercies shal neuer cease from following you in this life, till you haue receaued the summe of all mercies in life euerlasting.

Thus we haue heard what blessings the Lord bestowed vpon Elizabeth, and how she, her neighbours and Cosins reioyced thereat, in rendring praise and thankes for the same vnto the Lord. Now let vs pray vnto our good God, and louing father in Jesus Christ, yeelding vnto him all praises and thankes for his great mercie already shewed, as generally vpon vs all, so particularlie for his great mercies towards her, for whose cause especially we are assembled, to reioyce in thankefulnes vnto him.

FINIS.

Errata

In the 4 *Pag. lin.* 1. *for* Lod *read* Lord. *Pag.* 11. *lin.* 15 *for* deliuer to *read* to deliuer. *Pag.* 15. *lin.* 9. *for* serueth, *read* seareth, *& li.* 16. *for* watching, walking. *& lin.* 28 *for* falleth, faileth. *Pag.* 18. *li.* 6 *for* his, this. *Pag.* 19. *lin.* 14. *for* mutis, cautes. *Pag.* 20. *lin.* 9. *for* spirituall, speciall.

The thankes-giuing.

O Lord our God moſt gratious and moſt mercifull father in Ieſus Chriſt, wee thine humble ſeruants doo yeelde vnto thy diuine Maieſtie through him, (in whō onlie thou art well pleaſed;) all poſsible thanks from the bottome of our heartes, for all thy benefits and bleſsings, both publique and priuate of bodie and of ſoule, which from thy bountiful hands in great mercie we haue receiued. And eſpeciallie O Lord we praiſe and magnifie thy glorious name, for thy great mercies beſtowed vpon thine handmaide, in giuing her to conceiue, to accompliſh her ful time, and to bring foorth a man-childe into the world. This mercie thou haſt reuealed vnto vs out of thine holie word, to bee a great mercie, and from thy great mercie onelie to proceede: ſo O Lorde we doo acknowledge it, ſo wee accept it; confeſſing no power to bee in any creature in Heauen or in earth to bring the ſame to paſſe, nor worthines, or merit to binde thee thereunto. For this thy great mercie therefore towards her; wee extoll and laude thy name, reioycing with her in all thankfulnes and reuerence (on her behalfe,) vnto thy maieſtie: and we further in Ieſus Chriſt his name, moſt humblie beſeech thy fatherlie good-

nes, as thou haſt thus mercifullie begun ſo to continue on thy louing fauour and kindenes towards her, and the ſweete infant which ſhe hath brought foorth into the world. O Lord ſtrengthen her by thy power, comfort her by thy ſpirit, that howſoeuer now ſhe be brought into a lowe and a weake eſtate, that yet in due time, ſhee may recouer her former ſtrength, and be able to come to giue thee praiſe for her gracious deliuerance, and for all other thy bleſsings, with the reſt of thy Saints in the great congregation. Bleſſe alſo O Lord her infant, that as ſhee hath ſuſtained ſorrowe and paine in bearing it in her womb, and in bringing it foorth, ſo by thy bleſsings vpon it, ſhe may receaue comfort and ioye; when not onelie ſhee may ſee it to haue receaued the Sacrament of new birth, but when comming to age of diſcretion, it ſhall manifeſt, by a godlie and an holy life: that it is borne a new and regenerate in ſpirite, and is of the number of them, with whom thou haſt made this pretious couenant, I will be thy God, and the God of thy ſeed. For theſe graces, O Lord our God as we pray thus particularly, (in regard of this preſent occaſion) ſo we beſeech thee to enlarge thy ſelfe in al other neceſsarie mercies to vs, and to thy whole Church generallie, eſpeciallie in the pardoning, & forgiuing of our ſinnes, according to thy promiſe in Ieſus Chriſt, in whoſe name (with the ſame words which he hath taught vs,) we pray further vnto thee, ſaying, *Our Father, &c.*

7 NO 55

FINIS.